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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: MOJ REAFFIRMS ANTI-TIP COMMITMENT

REF: SKOPJE 178 AND PREVIOUS

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) In a March 10 meeting, Minister of Justice (MOJ) Manevski briefed the Charge on recent MOJ prosecutorial and court consolidation activities that should enhance Macedonia's efforts to combat trafficking-in-persons (TIP). Additionally, on March 12 the National Commission for Combating TIP and Illegal Migration (NC) began implementing its TIP Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). End summary.

MINISTER OF JUSTICE TALKS ABOUT TIP-RELATED REFORMS

¶2. (SBU) In a March 10 meeting with Minister of Justice Manevski, the Charge expressed appreciation for Macedonia's strong efforts to eradicate TIP in Macedonia. Urging the MOJ to do more to make court data on TIP cases available, the Charge asked also for further high-level public outreach condemning TIP and commercial sex, with the aim of reducing demand.

¶3. (SBU) Minister Manevski cited the current case against the Operation "Dragon" traffickers (reftel) as an example of the GOM's diligence in rooting out traffickers. He also described the consolidation underway in which the Special Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime would be designated to prosecute all TIP and smuggling cases. Manevski added that amendments to the Law on Courts, unanimously passed on March 11, will further strengthen Macedonia's capacities to effectively combat TIP, by giving a single trial court in Skopje sole jurisdiction for trying organized crime cases, including TIP cases, for the entire country.

NATIONAL COMMISSION STARTS SOP IMPLEMENTATION

¶4. (SBU) On March 12, the NC began implementing its TIP SOPs, adopted by the government at the beginning of 2008. The NC appointed a GOM-NGO team of experts to begin conducting SOP training with police, social workers and others around the country. The team includes representatives from the Ministry of Labor; Ministry of Interior; Special Prosecutor's Office for Organized Crime; National Referral Mechanism; NGO "For Happy Childhood"; and NGO "Open Gate/La Strada."

COMMENT

15. (SBU) The Charge's meeting with the MOJ and the beginning of SOP implementation underscored the GOM's determination to sustain its momentum in combating TIP. The MOJ-related changes will allow for concentration of anti-TIP efforts overall, and should decrease chances for lax prosecutions or protracted trials in TIP cases. The inclusion of NGO representatives in key roles related to SOP implementation will ensure that first-responders, who deal with potential TIP victims, receive the best possible training.
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